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EXAMINER

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Russell, Rosalind

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Mrs. Pollifax

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Rosalind Russell Disarms

By Jeanne Miller

Saturday afternoon's retrospective tribute to Rosalind Russell was one of the Film Festival's liveliest events.

The capacity crowd accorded the actress a standing ovation when she appeared on stage, following a long series of clips from her films that ranged from her early efforts in the '30s to her newest, as yet unreleased movie, "Mrs. Pollifax — Spy."

Miss Russell is an attractive, charming woman with a keen sense of humor and an ability to establish an immediate rapport with her audience. In "Mrs. Pollifax," the actress plays a middle-aged lady who becomes a spy for the C.I.A. When a segment of the film was shown, the crowd, up to that time applauding vigorously, began to hiss each time the C.I.A. was mentioned.

But when someone in the audience took Miss Russell on about playing a C.I.A. agent, her warm, humorous response was

totally disarming and the mildly hostile atmosphere dissolved into a mood of friendly affability.

"I thought 'Mrs. Pollifax' would be fun to do," she said. "I did a lot of research on the subject and I found out that the C.I.A. uses only volunteers. So I decided that a lonely middle-aged widow would enjoy dabbling in espionage. And so she did."

The star wittily commented on her long career in films and lamented the fact that, in the beginning, she never got her man.

"I was always the other woman," she said, "a terribly prim, mostly British type. But it got to be very tiresome always losing my man to Jean Harlow or Myrna Loy."

"When I was young, I was disappointed that I was never considered for sex symbol roles. But when I grew older, I was glad I never had to cope with the tremendous pressure of sustaining the sex symbol image."

C.I.A. Critics

"I've been told that I did a great deal without realizing it for Women's Lib when I really got into my career woman thing. I played judges, psychiatrists, writers, attorneys and flyers and in 'His Girl Friday,' which was based on 'The Front Page,' I played the reporter, Hildy Johnson, which was originally a man's role in the play."

Miss Russell, who is primarily thought of as a comedienne, had great difficulty in convincing producers that she could do comedy.

"The Women' was the turning point in my career," she said. "But what a time I had getting the role. When I asked the producer to let me try out, and I blush to tell you this, he said I was too beautiful to be funny. I've been laughing about that ever since."

"Comedy is in the brain of the performer, not just in the lines he reads. That's why it's such a challenge and so rewarding to play."